





How to Study the Bible

AN ADDRESS
FOR
TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

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"THE TEXT OF JEREMIAH," "THE OLD TESTAMENT VINDICATED," ETC.

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How to Study the Bible.

An Address for Teachers and Students.

[T is many years since I took part in a Provincial Sabbath School Convention, and I feel exceedingly glad to be here to take part in this Convention this afternoon. You will see that I am down for a pretty long address, so I shall not stop to make any preliminary remarks.

I want to tell you some reasons why I selected this subject, and I trust you will understand my purpose in giving you these reasons. It is simply that we may for the time being look at this important subject from the same point of view, so far as possible, for I have often thought that the Bible is the worst understood book in the world. Indeed, I have often said modestly that the Bible is the worst understood book in the world; and, as I desire the statement to be taken, I believe it to be strictly true. I intend to say that with respect to its historic meaning the Bible is of all books in the world the most misunderstood. This fact, this lamentable fact, as I regard it, is owing to several unfortunate causes.

The Bible is misunderstood because of false theories of inspiration. Until quite recently, almost every theory of inspiration was more or less mechanical in its character, and the Scriptures were supposed to have been miraculously dictated to a class of men who were unlike other mortals; whereas the Scriptures were composed by men of like passions with ourselves, who spoke or wrote on religious subjects as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, but who made use of a great variety of literary materials of one kind and another in the wisest and best way they knew.

The Bible is misunderstood, also, because of erroneous views of revelation. Hitherto, as a rule, the whole body of Scripture has been viewed as a supernatural revelation, and every scriptural statement has been regarded as the veritable word of God ; whereas the Bible itself is not revelation, but the record of revelation ; and that not a single revelation of equal breadth and brightness, but a progressive series of revelations which culminated in the teaching of our Lord. Moreover, the divine truth contained in the Bible is not so much a revelation from God as a revelation of God, because the Deity is a self-manifesting Being, who has been revealing himself to men in every age, so far as they were able to perceive him and to apprehend his will.

The Bible is also misunderstood because of wrong methods of interpretation. In former times, for the most part, men have studied the Scriptures, not so much to find out what they really mean as to find out what they might ingeniously be made to mean. In other words, instead of studying the Scriptures as they would study other writings to ascertain their natural, logical, historical meaning, they have rather studied them to draw some lesson, to trace some doctrine, or to teach some creed. To a certain extent this has been the case with respect to the whole Bible, but especially has it been the case with respect to the Old Testament. When expounding this portion of the Bible, expositors have generally employed a spiritualizing, or an allegorizing, or an apologizing method of interpretation which has totally misled them as to its true teaching on very many points. By adopting one or other of these methods, they have tried to obtain a Christian meaning where no Christian meaning existed ; they have tried to discover a hidden sense where no hidden sense was intended ; they have tried to defend an ancient position when the position was untenable ; they have tried to remove a moral difficulty when the difficulty was immovable ; and they have tried to maintain a personal reference to the Messiah when such a reference was utterly impossible.

At the close of a Sabbath School lesson that I taught some years ago in one of the churches of this city, a thoughtful woman came to talk with me while the other members of the class were retiring from the room. Among other things, she said, "I have never been able to understand the Old Testament. When reading one of the historical books, I have been told that one part of a chapter refers to Moses or Joshua, but that another part of it refers to Jesus ; and, when reading one of the Psalms, I have been told that certain verses refer to David or Solomon, but that certain other verses refer to

Christ. I never could see how that could be." I do not wonder that my friend could not understand the Old Testament, because no book in it can be properly understood that is treated in that fanciful way.

Besides these three specific reasons—false theories of inspiration, erroneous views of revelation, and wrong methods of interpretation—there is another reason of a more general kind why the Bible is so badly understood, namely, a widespread acceptance of biblical difficulties as incapable of explanation. It has often been stated in sermons or observed in books that there are difficulties in the Bible which no one can understand, and that the difficulty of understanding it all is an argument in favor of its divinity. "If I could grasp the whole book," observes a well-known Christian writer, "I should say at once, 'It is the work of human intellects, like my own.'" That sort of statement has been made in one form or another a great many times. Nine years ago last summer I spent most of the season at Clifton Springs, in the State of New York. During my sojourn there, I met a bright young man from one of the Southern States, who was feeling perplexed over a similar statement which he had heard his pastor make a few weeks before coming north. "I do not pretend to understand the whole of the Bible," the pastor said; "if I could understand it all it would be to me a human book. It is because I cannot understand the whole Bible that I believe it to be a divine book."

That is to me an extraordinary confession. Without stopping to tell you what I said to that young man at the time, I may simply say I believe the Bible to be a divine book, not because I cannot understand it, but because I can understand it, and because I know it was meant to be understood by those who study it with proper mental and spiritual qualifications. Mark, I say with proper mental and spiritual qualifications, because qualifications of both kinds are needed in order to understand it aright. There are difficulties in the Bible, of course, just as there are in all other ancient literatures, difficulties that are due to imperfections in the manuscripts and to obscurities in the composition; but there is no difficulty that cannot be fairly and reasonably explained. There are truths in the Bible, too, so deep, so high, so broad that no finite mind can comprehend them; but there is no truth that cannot be rationally conceived and rationally believed.

Just here let me put you on your guard against a very common habit, not of explaining a biblical difficulty, but of explaining it away. There is a class of teachers who have a practice, which cannot be too strongly deprecated, of interpreting Scripture so as to meet

some supposed need of science or criticism. For instance, when physical scientists began to show from the testimony of the rocks that the world was not made in six days of twenty-four hours each, these teachers took the ground that the word for day in the first chapter of Genesis means not an ordinary solar day, but a geological age or a geological epoch. That is not explaining the difficulty, but explaining it away. The writer of Genesis was not thinking of geological ages or geological epochs. Those are modern terms which were not known till a comparatively few years ago. But, describing a progress in the work of creation, the writer uses the word for a day of ordinary length to express the unknown time of one or, possibly, of more than one creative operation. The word he employs, however, means a day of ordinary length, and he had no thought of any other kind of day in his mind. So much for an endeavor to explain away a difficulty of Scripture raised by science.

Let me also give you an illustration of a similar endeavor to explain away a difficulty of Scripture raised by criticism. Since biblical critics began to refer to certain errors and contradictions in the Bible, these teachers have tried to explain the difficulties away by asserting that, whatever errors there may be in the present manuscripts, there were no errors in the original autographs. That is a most unjustifiable assertion. We do not possess the original autographs, nor is there any reason to suppose that the earlier manuscripts were any freer from errors than the existing manuscripts are. As an earnest student of the text of Scripture, I want to tell you frankly that textual imperfections, instead of becoming less numerous, became more numerous the further back we go. Such imperfections belong to the human element in the Bible, and without miraculous intervention such as the Bible does not warrant, much less claim, they were inevitable. In dealing with biblical difficulties, therefore, we should seek to explain them, and not to explain them away.

For the reasons I have mentioned, I regard proper biblical interpretation as the prime, if not the supreme, need of the Christian Church at the present time. After considering some of the principles of interpretation which I had previously explained to his satisfaction, some principles which I intend to illustrate in this lecture, a well-known Christian layman in this city once stopped me on the street, and said, "I have been wondering whether most readers of the Bible to-day do not each need to be asked the question which Philip asked the Ethiopian eunuch, 'Understandest thou what thou readest?'" That wonder which my friend expressed I cannot help but share.

In trying to show you in a single lecture how to study the Bible so as to understand it aright, I shall be able, of course, only to state the leading principles in a very general way. These principles I shall illustrate by practical examples, following an outline so simple that every one may carry it in the mind.

In the first place, we should study the Bible as *literature*. On the human side, the books of the Bible are literature, as truly as the works of Homer or Horace, of Shakespeare or Milton, of Bacon or Macaulay, are literature. As a literature, the Bible contains great variety of composition, almost every variety indeed of any ancient composition. Some of it is history and some of it is chronology; some of it is biography and some of it is genealogy; some of it is allegory and some of it is symbol; some of it is prophecy and some of it is parable; some of it is drama and some of it is ritual; some of it is poetry and some of it is prose. Being a literature, the Bible not only contains a great variety of matter, but also reveals a great diversity of purpose. While the great bulk of this literature possesses a religious character and was written with a religious purpose, some of it has a historical purpose, some of it has a chronological purpose, some of it has a biographical purpose, some of it has a genealogical purpose, some of it has a prophetic or didactic purpose, some of it has a sanitary purpose, like many of the regulations of Moses; some of it has a national purpose, like the book of Esther; some of it has a patriotic purpose, like the book of Lamentations; and some of it has a moral purpose, like the Song of Songs.

Hence we should study the Bible as we would study any other book, with grammar and lexicon and critical appliances of every kind, in order to obtain the exact thought in the mind of each writer; but, before interpreting any part of Scripture, we should ascertain, first, what sort of literature it is; and, secondly, what sort of purpose it reveals. Having determined the character of the composition, and having discovered the purpose of the writer, we should then interpret each passage in accordance with the laws that govern that particular kind of literature, whether it be history or chronology, biography or genealogy, allegory or symbol, prophecy or parable, drama or ritual, poetry or prose. Owing to the very composite character of Scripture, some books of the Bible may themselves contain a variety of literature. Several kinds indeed may be found in a single book, in one of the longer books especially. That being the case, you can see, we shall always have to examine each part of a book to find out what kind of literature it is, and what the purpose of the writer was.

Take the book of Genesis, for example. The first chapter is semi-

scientific in its character, as it deals in a popular way with the work of creation; the second and third chapters are largely symbolic in their character, as the description of the Garden and the account of the Fall indicate; the remaining chapters are partly historical, partly chronological, partly biographical and partly genealogical, as an examination of their contents will show. We must interpret each part of that book, therefore, according to its character and purpose; and we must be very careful not to treat symbolic expressions, such as "the tree of life," "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," "the serpent," and "the cherubim," literally, because they were not intended to be taken literally. Do you ask me what these symbolic expressions represent? I answer briefly and concisely: The tree of life symbolizes the source of life, which is God; the tree of the knowledge of good and evil symbolizes the birth of conscience, the experience a man has when he consciously does wrong, and learns for the first time the difference between wrong and right; the serpent represents an evil spirit, a spirit of disobedience and contumacy; the cherubim represent divine attributes, so that they should be regarded not as actual beings, but as attributes of God.

In the second place, we should study the Bible as *ancient literature*. There is a maxim well known to scholars that any given literature bears the marks and shares the limitations of the period in which it was produced. The older the literature is the cruder its conceptions will be. Those conceptions represent the best thought of an ancient time. Hence we should regard such conceptions as the immature ideas of the people of that time. The importance of this principle is so great that I shall need to give you several examples by way of illustration, because I do assure you that we shall never understand the Bible rightly till we learn to interpret each part of it, not only in the light of the times in which it was written, but also in accordance with the ideas which then prevailed.

When the writer of Genesis, for instance, says that the first man was formed directly from the dust of the ground, and that the first woman was built out of a rib taken from his side, we are not to take those statements as being authoritative in their literal form. They simply represent the highest thought of the time when they were written. A similar idea is found in Greek mythology, and many of you must have met with it. According to Apollodorus, Prometheus made the first man and woman that were ever upon earth out of clay—the very same idea that we have ascribed to Jehovah in the book of Genesis. Again, when the writer of Genesis tells us that Jehovah visited Abraham in a human form, and went into his tent

and ate food with him, we should interpret that account as belonging to a time when it was generally believed that men sometimes entertain angels, and even gods ; but we must not take the statements as being literally true, or suppose that God actually appeared to Abraham with a human body, and ate food with him in his tent.

Once more, the story of Balaam, as recorded in the book of Numbers, should be regarded as belonging to a time when the idea of animals talking with men was practically universal, and we must interpret the account in the light of that fact. There is no reason to believe there was ever a time when animals talked, but there was a time when people believed that they talked ; and this passage represents the belief of that time. In a similar way we should treat the story in the book of Joshua of the sun and moon standing still. That account belongs to a time when men had no adequate conception either of the character of God or of the constitution of the universe. Men then believed that God could do anything, or that there was nothing too hard for him to do. Men then supposed that the sun rose and set, not knowing, as we now know, that it always stands still. Hence the account simply represents the idea of an ancient time. We now know that God can do nothing out of harmony with His laws, as well as nothing inconsistent with His character. We now know, too, that God governs the universe by laws, and that if the earth, which moves, and not the sun, should stop moving for a single minute, the results would be incalculable.

By these illustrations I wish you all to see that we should not regard the unscientific beliefs of an ancient time as in any sense whatever binding on us. I might also give you some examples from the New Testament, such as the belief about men being possessed of evil spirits, and the notion that women ought not to speak in public with uncovered heads. We would not express ourselves in either of these ways to-day. Such examples represent the beliefs of the age or the customs of the period in which they obtained, and they are but two illustrations out of many that might be given. Thus we should study the Bible as ancient literature, in accordance with the ideas which prevailed when the different parts of it were written.

In the third place, we should study the Bible as *oriental literature*. Eastern peoples do not express themselves as western peoples do. They are more imaginative in their thought, more extravagant in their speech, more figurative in their style. Compared with Anglo-Saxon peoples they are more impassioned and impulsive. Their manner, too, is more animated, and their descriptions are more bold. Hence

we must make allowance for all these features of oriental thought and speech; and, because of the facts that I have mentioned, we should interpret the Bible in accordance with oriental modes of thought and oriental forms of speech. We must study the language of each writer, obtain his point of view, and explain his words in harmony with his particular manner of expressing himself.

This is a point on which I desire to lay great emphasis, inasmuch as its importance is not yet appreciated by the ordinary student of the Bible. We have still, as we have always had, a class of people who may be best described as literalists, because they claim that the Scriptures should be interpreted literally, or according to the exact words as they appear on the printed page. We must take the Bible just as it stands, these people say. I met one of them a short time since, and their number is very large. Let us see what would be the result, if we did take the Bible just as it stands.

According to the Gospel of Matthew, when supping for the last time with his disciples, Jesus took bread, and, having broken it, he gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take, eat; this is my body." Now, if we are to take these words just as they stand, we must hold that the disciples ate the very body of Christ when he handed them the broken bread, and we must also hold that those who teach the doctrine of transubstantiation are right in their interpretation of this passage; whereas we know that the phrase, "This is my body" is a rhetorical expression which means, This represents my body.

In the 8th chapter of Luke's Gospel, we are told that, after Jesus had given the people his parable of the sower, his disciples asked him "what this parable might be." Taking these words just as they stand, we should have to suppose that they wished him to explain just what a parable is; whereas we know from the teaching of the context that, when they asked "what this parable might be," they meant to ask, What does this parable signify? for in the next verse but one our Lord says, "Now the parable is this"—meaning that the interpretation or explanation of the parable is what he goes on to show them in the verses that immediately follow. Thus in neither of these cases do we take the Bible just as it stands, but in each case we have to supply something to bring out the sense. Let me give you one example more.

In the 12th chapter of Matthew and the last verse, Jesus is reported to have said, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother." Here we have to supply several words in order to show the proper meaning, because, while any good man might be called the spiritual brother

and any good woman might be called the spiritual sister of Jesus, only one woman could properly be called his mother in any sense of the term. Our Lord evidently meant to say that any man or woman who would faithfully do the will of God would be as near to him spiritually, or as dear to him affectionately, as a brother, or a sister, or a mother.

These examples will suffice to show that we do not take the Bible just as it stands, and that we should not take the Bible just as it stands, but that we must always interpret each part of it in accordance with oriental modes of thought and oriental forms of speech. In thus interpreting the Scriptures, we must be careful to distinguish between rhetorical and logical forms of speech, because serious errors have arisen from mistaking rhetoric for logic. Do you see what I mean? The phrase, "This is my body," is not a logical, but a rhetorical, form. Hence we are not to take it as expressing Christ's thought literally, but we are to take it as expressing his thought rhetorically; and we have to supply a word or two to bring out its sense, or to express its meaning. Yet, notwithstanding the clearness with which we all see that fact, Roman Catholic interpreters appear not to see it; for they take the phrase to be a logical form, instead of taking it to be what it is, a rhetorical form.

Let me now give you some examples of orientalism in the Old Testament, that will illustrate more fully what I wish to teach under this head. The Hebrew writers sometimes speak of God as hardening man's heart, and even as tempting man to sin. But God does not harden man's heart; that is an oriental form of speech. Man hardens his own heart. God has, however, made the laws of moral nature such that, if man disobeys them, his very disobedience will tend to make his heart hard. Of course, God is back of it all, or in it all, because he stands for his own laws; but we must not ascribe to him directly what belongs to a man personally. As God does not harden man's heart, so he does not tempt man to sin; and yet we have suggestions of that kind in the Old Testament. A perfect Being can not tempt a man to sin, but each man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lusts and enticed. Man allows himself to be tempted; God does not do it. You will see, then, that all expressions in the Bible which represent God as prompting men either to do evil or to be cruel, should be interpreted as Hebrew forms of speech, which originated in an oriental mode of thought. Take another class of illustrations.

The Hebrew writers represent God also as hiding his face and as withdrawing his Spirit from his people; but such forms of speech

are not to be taken literally. They are metaphorical expressions peculiar to the oriental mind. God does not hide his face, much less withdraw his Spirit, from his people; but trouble may dim our spiritual vision at times so that we do not see him as clearly or feel his presence as strongly as at other times. Sin, too, may destroy our spiritual communion, so that we have not the same fellowship with God at certain times that we have at other times; but we must not interpret any such expression in the Bible literally.

Take one more class of illustrations: Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, God is sometimes represented as talking and walking, as hearing and seeing, as remembering and forgetting, as resolving and repenting, and the like. These are rather anthropomorphisms than orientalisms, but they are expressions peculiar to ancient times and to oriental peoples. According to both Old and New Testament teaching, God is not only a spiritual Being, who cannot be seen, but also an infinite and eternal Being, who does not change. We must not, therefore, interpret these expressions literally. Since God is a Spirit, an infinite and eternal Spirit, he has neither mouth, nor nose, nor eyes, nor ears, nor hands, nor feet; but, though he has none of these physical organs, he can be to his people spiritually all that is implied in the application of such language to him.

In the fourth place, we should study the Bible as *developed literature*. When I describe the Bible as developed literature, I mean, first, that some parts of Scripture were developed from a literature that is much older than that contained in the Bible. Men used to think that the book of Genesis was the oldest piece of literature in existence, but the recent decipherment of the cuneiform inscriptions has revealed another still more ancient literature, one which gives us an Assyrian account of the Creation, of the Fall, of the Flood and of the Tower of Babel, in a form that is shown by the mythological and polytheistic features to be much older than the biblical account, the latter being a purified and spiritualized and monotheized version of the former. Having read some of these stories in the old wedge-shaped characters of Babylon and Assyria, I can assure you that the form in which we find these stories there is much older than the form in which we find them in the book of Genesis. The earlier narratives of that book were constructed out of traditional materials which were derived from Babylonia, as Professor Sayce believes, or were shared in common by both Hebrews and Babylonians, as other oriental scholars believe; but, at all events, in their present form they are a development from more crude as well as more primitive forms.

When I describe the Bible as developed literature, I mean,

secondly, that the religious ideas contained in it were gradually developed, having been more clearly apprehended and more correctly presented from age to age. The Bible records a progressive morality and a progressive theology. No one can study it carefully without perceiving a progress in moral teaching, as well as a development in religious doctrine. There is, indeed, a perceptible difference between the earlier and the later ideas on almost every subject. The more ancient writings present such views of truth as were obtainable by men who had reached a stage of partial religious development, and the more modern writings present such views as could be obtained by men who had arrived at a stage of complete religious development. In these latter writings we find not only higher standards of morality, but also clearer perceptions of duty and loftier ideals of life.

We ought, therefore, to interpret the language of the Bible in harmony with the meanings which were attached to the words at the time when the writers employed them. That is the special point I want to make just here. Interpreting its language in this manner, we shall obtain a new view of a good many passages, for we shall find that a word used in one part of Scripture has a very different meaning from that which it has when used in another part of Scripture. Let me give you some illustrations of the way in which the application of this principle will modify our view of the true significance of both Old and New Testament passages.

Take the word translated "truth" in the Old Testament. As a rule, it has a meaning there which is very different from the meaning which it has in the New Testament. By way of illustration, look at the 5th verse of the 25th Psalm: "Guide me in thy truth, and teach me; for thou art the God of my salvation." According to the New Testament usage, that would be a prayer for divine instruction in religious doctrine, because we generally find the word truth used in the sense of doctrine in the New Testament; but here and elsewhere throughout the Psalms the word in the original means truthfulness or faithfulness. Hence the first line of the verse should be translated, "Guide me in thy truthfulness, and teach me." We have another beautiful illustration in the 3rd verse of the 43rd Psalm: "O send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me." This is a prayer for light and help from God. Truth here is not religious doctrine; it is an attribute of God. Hence we should translate, "O send out thy light and thy truthfulness."

The word translated "salvation" in the Old Testament has not the meaning we commonly give to it when we find it in the New Testament. Take, for instance, the last verse of the 3rd Psalm: "Salva-

tion belongeth unto the Lord." In the New Testament the word generally means deliverance from sin or from spiritual ruin, but in the Old Testament it commonly means deliverance from danger or from physical death; so that we ought to have the word deliverance, instead of salvation, in the text. Looking at the Psalm, you will see how manifest this is. In the preceding verses the writer speaks of being surrounded by enemies, and in this verse he declares that deliverance from these enemies belongeth to the Lord. We have another illustration in the 25th Psalm and 5th verse, to which I have already referred for another purpose, where the word salvation ought to be rendered deliverance to express the true thought: "For thou art the God of my deliverance" the writer means to say; thou art the one to whom I always come in time of trouble, and to whom I always look for help and success when contending with enemies. In neither of these cases has the word the evangelical sense of deliverance from sin or from spiritual ruin. There is another illustration in the 85th Psalm and the 9th verse, and I could give you many more.

The words so often translated in the Old Testament "redemption" and "redeem" have not the evangelical meaning there that they generally have in the New Testament. The word redemption is beautifully adapted to express the deliverance from sin that is in Christ, but in the Old Testament it commonly means deliverance, being used very much like the word salvation. Though the latter is a term of wider import than the former is, the highest meaning it has in the Old Testament is temporal deliverance accompanied with spiritual blessings; but the temporal element is always a prominent element in the ancient meaning of each of these two words. In the 9th verse of the 111th Psalm, we have a good example: "He hath sent redemption unto his people." Here the meaning is that he sent deliverance to his people, and the word for redemption should be translated deliverance. Quite frequently in the prophetic writings, where we have the word "redeemed," it ought to be rendered rescued or delivered, because the primary reference is to temporal deliverance.

Even in the New Testament the word "redeem" has not always its evangelical meaning. When the disciples on the way to Emmaus exclaimed, according to Luke 24: 21, "We hoped that it was he which should redeem Israel," they were not then thinking of evangelical redemption, or redemption from sin; but they were thinking rather of some one who should redeem Israel, temporally speaking, from the power of his enemies and make of him again a great nation. In the 68th verse of the 1st chapter of Luke we have another example of an Old Testament use of the word for redemption in the New

Testament: "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; for he hath visited and wrought redemption for his people." The context shows that Zacharias was not then speaking of redemption in the evangelical sense of the term, but of deliverance from national enemies. These illustrations will help you to see the importance of interpreting the language of the Scriptures in harmony with the meanings attached to the words at the time when the writers employed them.

In the fifth place, we should study the Bible as *inspired literature*. Though the Bible is a literature, it is not an ordinary, but a sacred, literature. It is a sacred literature, because it is concerned with religious matters, and was written by inspired men. Hence, while we should study the Bible with grammar and lexicon and critical helps of the best kind, in order to obtain the exact thought in the mind of each writer, we should always have regard to its religious character and its spiritual contents. That is to say, while we should apply to the Bible the same rules of grammar and the same laws of thought that we apply to other literature, we must never overlook the spiritual element in the Bible.

When I speak of a "spiritual element" in the Bible, my language implies that there is another element in it; and that is what I mean, and what I want to get you all to see. There are two elements in the Bible, a spiritual and eternal element and a temporal or perishable element. The Bible has been misunderstood, I said at the outset, because of false theories of inspiration. These theories have kept men from seeing the two-fold character of Scripture. One class of teachers has regarded the Bible as wholly a divine book; it was all of God. Another class of teachers has regarded the Bible as wholly a human book; it was all of man. Modern scholars recognize that in the Bible, as in the person of Christ, there are two elements, a human element and a divine element; and they teach that it is the presence of the divine element in the Bible that constitutes its inspiration.

To make my meaning still more plain, because I consider this point of vital importance, let me ask, What does conversion or regeneration do for a man when he becomes quickened in heart and life by the Spirit of God? Does it give him any new knowledge of science or philosophy? No. Does it give him any new knowledge of history or chronology? No. Does it give him any new knowledge of astronomy or geography? No. What kind of knowledge, then, does it give him? It gives him a new knowledge of God; a new consciousness of his presence; a new appreciation of his power; a new experience of his grace. There is in Holy Scripture, as in human experi-

ence, two kinds of knowledge—a knowledge of God and a knowledge of his works. It is the element that has to do with the knowledge of God that we call the inspired element; the element that has to do with the knowledge of his works we call the human element.

The Bible is not inspired as a loaf of bread is leavened, giving it the same texture throughout, so that no matter where you cut it you will get the same kind of material. If you cut the Bible in one place, you will get history, and history is not inspired—historic facts, I mean, are not inspired. If you cut it in another place, you will get chronology, and chronology is not inspired. If you cut it in another place, you will get genealogy, and genealogy is not inspired. So I might show you in regard to its other features. In the Bible, too, there are sayings of ungodly men; they are not inspired. In the Bible there are also communications of false prophets; they are not inspired. In the Bible there are likewise conversations ascribed to Satan; they are not inspired. While, therefore, we should interpret the Bible as an inspired book, we must not assume that every passage expresses a divinely inspired sentiment, or contains a divinely authorized statement.

It should here be observed that, though some of the foregoing statements are negative in form, they are not destructive, but discriminative, in character, being made with a view to correcting misconceptions in regard to the subject of inspiration, as well as with a view to showing each one how to distinguish between the human and the divine element in the Scriptures. Whenever we find in them an utterance that appeals to our conscience, such as "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart," or a precept that applies to our conduct, such as "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them," we may know that it is divinely inspired. These examples should make clear what I mean.

We are to interpret the Bible, recognizing in it two elements, the one divine—dealing with God, his character, his truth, his manifestation of himself to man; and the other human—dealing with God's works, and with man's relation to them or with man's use of them. Thus I would like you to see that it is only the moral truths and spiritual principles of the Bible that are inspired. Only that teaching in the Scriptures which pertains to divine redemption, and deals with those ideas which have to do with faith and conduct—only such teaching should, in my judgment, speaking reverently and modestly, be called inspired. That feature of Scripture constitutes the divine element, because it is of God. The other features constitute the human element, because they are of man.

How should we study the Bible so as to understand it? First, as literature; secondly, as ancient literature; thirdly, as oriental literature; fourthly, as developed literature; fifthly, as inspired literature, for with one or other of these principles every passage may be explained; or, to express the same thing in one sentence, we should study the Bible as ancient, oriental, developed and inspired literature, and we should bring to the study of this literature the same use of reason and the same exercise of common sense that we bring to the study of any other literature.

Before concluding, let me ask you to use the Revised Version in your study of the Bible, for in thousands of places it expresses the meaning much more adequately than the Authorized Version does. Let me also ask you to pay particular attention to the marginal readings in the New Revision of the Old Testament, because they are generally better than those which stand in the text. But for the length of this address, I would like to present some examples of superior rendering from both the Old and the New Testament; but I will content myself with giving only one, and I give that because it leads me naturally to my closing thought.

In the Authorized Version, the first line of the 130th verse of the 119th Psalm, is wrongly rendered, "The entrance of thy words giveth light;" in the Revised Version, this part of the verse is rightly rendered, "The opening of thy words giveth light." The rightness of the latter rendering is proved by the testimony of the Greek translation. The idea of the writer is not that of divine truth entering into the mind, but that of divine truth being opened up to the mind. The words of God give light only so far as they are spiritually opened, and some of them are comparatively dark till their true meaning is disclosed.

As teachers of the Bible, therefore, all our study of it should be conducted with dependence on the Divine Spirit for the purpose, first, of getting light from it, and then of walking in that light. In other words, we ought to study it practically and experimentally before attempting to teach it, by homing its truths in our heart, by practising its precepts in our business, and by realizing its principles in our life.